NUMBER 17
1ST EDITION, 2010

PERFORMANCE MONITORING & EVALUATION

TIPS

CONSTRUCTING AN EVALUATION REPORT

ABOUT TIPS

These TIPS provide practical advice and suggestions to USAID managers on issues related to performance monitoring and evaluation. This publication is a supplemental reference to the Automated Directive System (ADS) Chapter 203.

INTRODUCTION

This TIPS has three purposes. First, it provides guidance for evaluators on the structure, content, and style of evaluation reports. Second, it offers USAID officials, who commission evaluations, ideas on how to define the main deliverable. Third, it provides USAID officials with guidance on reviewing and approving evaluation reports.

The main theme is a simple one: *how to make an evaluation report useful to its readers.* Readers typically include a variety of development stakeholders and professionals; yet, the most important are the policymakers and managers who need credible information for program or project decision-making. Part of the primary purpose of an evaluation usually entails informing this audience.

To be useful, an evaluation report should address the evaluation questions and issues with accurate and data-driven findings, justifiable conclusions, and practical recommendations. It should reflect the use of sound evaluation methodology and data collection, and report the limitations of each. Finally, an evaluation should be written with a structure and style that promote learning and action.

Five common problems emerge in relation to evaluation reports. These problems are as follows:

- An unclear description of the program strategy and the specific results it is designed to achieve.
- Inadequate description of the evaluation's purpose, intended uses, and the specific evaluation questions to be addressed.
- Imprecise analysis and reporting of quantitative and qualitative data collected during the evaluation.
- A lack of clear distinctions between findings and conclusions.
- Conclusions that are not grounded in the facts and recommendations that do not flow logically from conclusions.

This guidance offers tips that apply to an evaluation report for any type of evaluation — be it formative, summative (or impact), a rapid appraisal evaluation, or one using more rigorous methods.

> Evaluation reports should be readily understood and should identify key points clearly, distinctly, and succinctly. (ADS 203.3.6.6)

A PROPOSED REPORT OUTLINE

Table 1 presents a suggested outline and approximate page lengths for a typical evaluation report. The evaluation team can, of course, modify this outline as needed. As

indicated in the table, however, some elements are essential parts of any report.

This outline can also help USAID managers define the key deliverable in an Evaluation Statement of Work (SOW) (see TIPS 3: Preparing an Evaluation SOW).

We will focus particular attention on the section of the report that covers findings, conclusions, and recommendations. This section represents the core element of the evaluation report.

BEFORE THE WRITING BEGINS

Before the report writing begins, the evaluation team must complete two critical tasks: 1) establish clear and defensible findings, conclusions, and recommendations that clearly address the evaluation questions; and 2) decide how to organize the report in a way that conveys these elements most effectively.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the most important tasks in constructing an evaluation report is to organize the report into three main elements: findings, conclusions, and recommendations (see Figure 1). This structure brings rigor to the evaluation and ensures that each element can ultimately be traced back to the basic facts. *It is this structure that sets evaluation apart from other types of analysis.*

Once the research stage of an evaluation is complete, the team has typically collected a great deal of data in order to answer the evaluation questions. Depending on the methods used, these data can include observations, responses to survey questions, opinions and facts from key informants, secondary data from a ministry, and so on. The team's first task is to turn these raw data into *findings.*

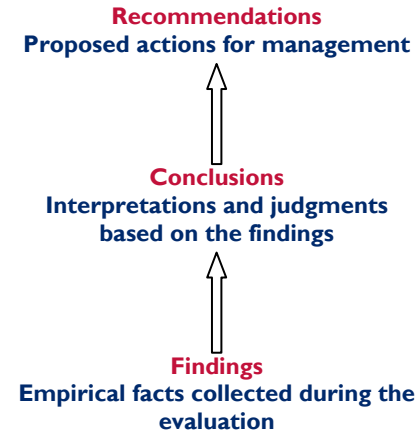
Suppose, for example, that USAID has charged an evaluation team with answering the following evaluation question (among others):

"How adequate are the prenatal services provided by the Ministry of Health's rural clinics in Northeastern District?"

To answer this question, their research in the district included site visits to a random sample of rural clinics, discussions with knowledgeable health professionals, and a survey of women who have used clinic prenatal services during the past year. The team analyzed the raw, qualitative data and identified the following findings:

- Of the 20 randomly-sampled rural clinics visited, four clinics met all six established standards of care, while the other 16 (80 percent) failed to meet at least two standards. The most commonly unmet standard (13 clinics) was "maintenance of minimum staff-patient ratios."
- In 14 of the 16 clinics failing to meet two or more standards, not one of the directors was able to state the minimum staff-patient ratios for nurse practitioners, nurses, and prenatal educators.

FIGURE 1. ORGANIZING KEY ELEMENTS OF THE EVALUATION REPORT



TYPICAL PROBLEMS WITH FINDINGS

Findings that:

1. Are not organized to address the evaluation questions — the reader must figure out where they fit.
2. Lack precision and/or context —the reader cannot interpret their relative strength.

   Incorrect: "Some respondents said 'x,' a few said 'y,' and others said 'z.'"

   Correct: "Twelve of the 20 respondents (60 percent) said 'x,' five (25 percent) said 'y,' and three (15 percent) said 'z.' "
3. Mix findings and conclusions.

   Incorrect: "The fact that 82 percent of the target group was aware of the media campaign indicates its effectiveness."

   Correct: Finding: "Eighty-two percent of the target group was aware of the media campaign." Conclusion: "The media campaign was effective."

TYPICAL PROBLEMS WITH CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions that:

1. Restate findings.

   Incorrect: "The project met its performance targets with respect to outputs and results."

   Correct: "The project's strategy was successful."

2. Are vaguely stated.

   Incorrect: "The project could have been more responsive to its target group."

   Correct: "The project failed to address the different needs of targeted women and men."

3. Are based on only one of several findings and data sources.

4. Include respondents' conclusions, which are really findings.

   Incorrect: "All four focus groups of project beneficiaries judged the project to be effective."

   Correct: "Based on our focus group data and quantifiable data on key results indicators, we conclude that the project was effective."

- Of 36 women who had used their rural clinics' prenatal services during the past year, 27 (76 percent) stated that they were "very dissatisfied" or "dissatisfied," on a scale of 1-5 from "very dissatisfied" to "very satisfied." The most frequently cited reason for dissatisfaction was "long waits for service" (cited by 64 percent of the 27 dissatisfied women).

- Six of the seven key informants who offered an opinion on the adequacy of prenatal services for the rural poor in the district noted that an insufficient number of prenatal care staff was a "major problem" in rural clinics.

These findings are the empirical facts collected by the evaluation team. Evaluation findings are analogous to the evidence presented in a court of law or a patient's symptoms identified during a visit to the doctor. Once the evaluation team has correctly laid out all the findings against each evaluation question, only then should *conclusions* be drawn for each question. This is where many teams tend to confuse findings and conclusions both in their analysis and in the final report.

Conclusions represent the team's judgments based on the findings. These are analogous to a court jury's decision to acquit or convict based on the evidence presented or a doctor's diagnosis based on the symptoms. The team must keep findings and conclusions distinctly separate from each other. However, there must also be a clear and logical relationship between findings and conclusions.

In our example of the prenatal services evaluation, examples of reasonable conclusions might be as follows:

- In general, the levels of prenatal care staff in Northeastern District's rural clinics are insufficient.

- The Ministry of Health's periodic informational bulletins to clinic directors regarding the standards of prenatal care are not sufficient to ensure that standards are understood and implemented.

However, sometimes the team's findings from different data sources are not so clear-cut in one direction as this one. In those cases, the team must weigh the relative credibility of the data sources and the quality of the data, and make a judgment call. The team might state that a definitive conclusion cannot be made, or it might draw a more guarded conclusion such as the following:

> "The preponderance of the evidence suggests that prenatal care is weak."

The team should never omit contradictory findings from its analysis and report in order to have more definitive conclusions. Remember, conclusions are *interpretations and judgments* made

TYPICAL PROBLEMS WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations that:

1. Are unclear about the action to be taken.

   Incorrect: "Something needs to be done to improve extension services."

   Correct: "To improve extension services, the Ministry of Agriculture should implement a comprehensive introductory training program for all new extension workers and annual refresher training programs for all extension workers. "

2. Fail to specify who should take action.

   Incorrect: "Sidewalk ramps for the disabled should be installed."

   Correct: "Through matching grant funds from the Ministry of Social Affairs, municipal governments should install sidewalk ramps for the disabled."

3. Are not supported by any findings and conclusions

4. Are not realistic with respect to time and/or costs.

   Incorrect: The Ministry of Social Affairs should ensure that all municipal sidewalks have ramps for the disabled within two years.

   Correct: The Ministry of Social Affairs should implement a gradually expanding program to ensure that all municipal sidewalks have ramps for the disabled within 15 years.

on the basis of the findings.

Sometimes we see reports that include conclusions derived from preconceived notions or opinions developed through experience gained *outside* the evaluation, especially by members of the team who have substantive expertise on a particular topic. We do not recommend this, because it can distort the evaluation. That is, the role of the evaluator is to present the findings, conclusions, and recommendations in a logical order. Opinions outside this framework are then, by definition, not substantiated by the facts at hand. If any of these opinions are directly relevant to the evaluation questions and come from conclusions drawn from prior research or secondary sources, then the data upon which they are based should be presented among the evaluation's findings.

FIGURE 3

OPTIONS FOR REPORTING FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

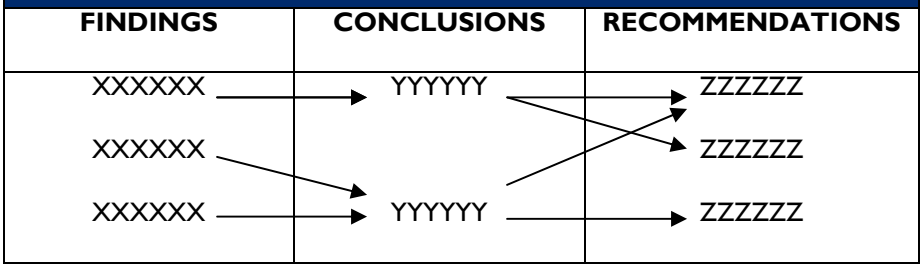
OPTION 1	OPTION 2
FINDINGS Evaluation Question 1 Evaluation Question 2 CONCLUSIONS Evaluation Question 1 Evaluation Question 2 RECOMMENDATIONS Evaluation Question 1 Evaluation Question 2	EVALUATION QUESTION 1 Findings Conclusions Recommendations EVALUATION QUESTION 2 Findings Conclusions Recommendations

OPTION 3

Mix the two approaches. Identify which evaluation questions are distinct and which are interrelated. For distinct questions, use option 1 and for the latter, use option 2.

FIGURE 2

Tracking the linkages is one way to help ensure a credible report, with information that will be useful.



Once conclusions are complete, the team is ready to make its recommendations. Too often recommendations do not flow from the team's conclusions or, worse, they are not related to the original evaluation purpose and evaluation questions. They may be good ideas, but they do not belong in this section of the report. As an alternative, they could be included in an annex with a note that they are derived from coincidental observations made by the team or from team members' experiences elsewhere.

Using our example related to rural health clinics, a few possible recommendations could emerge as follows:

- The Ministry of Health's Northeastern District office should develop and implement an annual prenatal standards-of-care training program for all its rural clinic directors. The program would cover….
- The Northeaster District office should conduct a formal assessment of prenatal care staffing levels in all its rural clinics.
- Based on the assessment, the Northeastern District office should establish and implement a five-year plan for hiring and placing needed prenatal care staff in its rural clinics on a most-needy-first basis.

Although the basic recommendations should be derived from conclusions and findings, this is where the team can include ideas and options for implementing recommendations that may be based on their substantive expertise and best practices drawn from experience outside the evaluation itself. Usefulness is paramount.

When developing recommendations, consider practicality. Circumstances or resources may limit the extent to which a recommendation can be implemented. If practicality is an issue — as is often the case — the evaluation team may need to ramp down recommendations, present them in terms of incremental steps, or suggest other options. In order to be useful, it is essential that recommendations be actionable or, in other words, feasible in light of the human, technical, and financial resources available.

Weak connections between findings, conclusions, and recommendations

can undermine the user's confidence in evaluation results. As a result, we encourage teams—or, better yet, a colleague who has not been involved—to review the logic before beginning to write the report. For each evaluation question, present all the findings, conclusions, and recommendations in a format similar to the one outlined in Figure 2.

Starting with the conclusions in the center, track each one back to the findings that support it, and decide whether the findings truly warrant the conclusion being made. If not, revise the conclusion as needed. Then track each recommendation to the conclusion(s) from which it flows, and revise if necessary.

CHOOSE THE BEST APPROACH FOR STRUCTURING THE REPORT

Depending on the nature of the evaluation questions and the findings, conclusions, and recommendations, the team has a few options for structuring this part of the report (see Figure 3). The objective is to present the report in a way that makes it as easy as possible for the reader to digest all of the information. Options are discussed below.

Option 1- Distinct Questions

If all the evaluation questions are distinct from one another and the relevant findings, conclusions, and recommendations do not cut across questions, then one option is to organize the report around each evaluation question. That is, each question will include a section including its relevant findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Option 2- Interrelated Questions

If, however, the questions are closely interrelated and there are findings, conclusions, and/or recommendations that apply to more than one question, then it may be preferable to put all the findings for all the evaluation questions in one section, all the conclusions in another, and all the recommendations in a third.

Option 3- Mixed

If the situation is mixed—where a few but not all the questions are closely interrelated—then use a mixed approach. Group the interrelated questions and their findings, conclusions, and recommendations into one sub-section, and treat the stand-alone questions and their respective findings, conclusions, and recommendations in separate sub-sections.

The important point is that the team should be sure to *keep findings, conclusions, and recommendations separate and distinctly labeled as such.*

Finally, some evaluators think it more useful to present the conclusions first, and then follow with the findings supporting them. This helps the reader see the "bottom line" first and then make a judgment as to whether the conclusions are warranted by the findings.

OTHER KEY SECTIONS OF THE REPORT

THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Executive Summary should stand alone as an abbreviated version of the entire report. Often it is the only thing that busy managers read. The Executive Summary should be a "mirror image" of the full report—it should contain no new information that is not in the main report. This principle also applies to making the Executive Summary and the full report equivalent with respect to presenting positive and negative evaluation results.

Although all sections of the full report are summarized in the Executive Summary, less emphasis is given to an overview of the project and the description of the evaluation purpose and methodology than is given to the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Decision-makers are generally more interested in the latter.

The Executive Summary should be written *after* the main report has been drafted. Many people believe that a good Executive Summary should not exceed two pages, but there is no formal rule in USAID on this. Finally, an Executive Summary should be written in a way that will entice interested stakeholders to go on to read the full report.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Many evaluation reports give only cursory attention to the development problem (or opportunity) that motivated the project in the first place, or to the

FIGURE 4. SUMMARY OF EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODS (an illustration)

Evaluation Question	Type of Analysis Conducted	Data Sources and Methods Used	Type and Size of Sample	Limitations
1. How adequate are the prenatal services provided by the Ministry of Health's (MOH) rural clinics in Northeastern District?	Comparison of rural clinics' prenatal service delivery to national standards	MOH manual of rural clinic standards of care Structured observations and staff interviews at rural clinics	Twenty clinics, randomly sampled from 68 total in Northeastern District	Three of the originally sampled clinics were closed when the team visited. To replace each, the team visited the closest open clinic. As a result, the sample was not totally random.
	Description, based on a content analysis of expert opinions	Key informant interviews with health care experts in the district and the MOH	Ten experts identified by project & MOH staff	Only seven of the 10 experts had an opinion about prenatal care in the district.
	Description and comparison of ratings among women in the district and two other similar rural districts	In-person survey of recipients of prenatal services at clinics in the district and two other districts	Random samples of 40 women listed in clinic records as having received prenatal services during the past year from each of the three districts' clinics	Of the total 120 women sampled, the team was able to conduct interviews with only 36 in the district, and 24 and 28 in the other two districts. The levels of confidence for generalizing to the populations of service recipients were __, __, and __, respectively.

"theory of change" that underpins USAID's intervention. The "theory of change" includes what the project intends to do and the results which the activities are intended to produce. TIPS 13: Building a Results Framework is a particularly useful reference and provides additional detail on logic models.

If the team cannot find a description of these hypotheses or any model of the project's cause-and-effect logic such as a Results Framework or a Logical Framework, this should be noted. The evaluation team will then have to summarize the project strategy in terms of the "if-then" propositions that show how the project designers envisioned the interventions as leading to desired results.

In describing the project, the evaluation team should be clear about what USAID tried to improve, eliminate, or otherwise change for the better. What was the "gap" between conditions at the start of the project and the more desirable conditions that USAID wanted to establish with the project? The team should indicate whether the project design documents and/or the recall of interviewed project designers offered a clear picture

of the specific economic and social factors that contributed to the problem — with baseline data, if available. Sometimes photographs and maps of before-project conditions, such as the physical characteristics and locations of rural prenatal clinics in our example, can be used to illustrate the main problem(s).

It is equally important to include basic information about when the project was undertaken, its cost, its intended beneficiaries, and where it was implemented (e.g., country-wide or only in specific districts). It can be particularly useful to include a map that shows the project's target areas.

A good description also identifies the organizations that implement the project, the kind of mechanism used (e.g., contract, grant, or cooperative agreement), and whether and how the project has been modified during implementation. Finally, the description should include information about context, such as conflict or drought, and other government or donor activities focused on achieving the same or parallel results.

THE EVALUATION PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The credibility of an evaluation team's findings, conclusions, and recommendations rests heavily on the quality of the research design, as well as on data collection methods and analysis used. The reader needs to understand what the team did and why in order to make informed

judgments about credibility. Presentation of the evaluation design and methods is often best done through a short

summary in the text of the report and a more detailed methods annex that includes the evaluation instruments. Figure 4 provides a sample summary of the design and methodology that can be included in the body of the evaluation report.

From a broad point of view, what *research design* did the team use to answer each evaluation question? Did the team use description (e.g., to document what happened), comparisons (e.g., of baseline data or targets to actual data, of actual practice to standards, among target sub-populations or locations), or cause-effect research (e.g., to determine whether the project made a difference)? To do cause-effect analysis, for example, did the team use one or more quasi-experimental approaches, such as time-series analysis or use of non-project comparison groups (see TIPS 11: The Role of Evaluation)?

More specifically, what *data collection methods* did the team use to get the evidence needed for each evaluation question? Did the team use key informant interviews, focus groups, surveys, on-site observation methods, analyses of secondary data, and other methods? How many people did they interview or survey, how many sites did they visit, and how did they select their samples?

Most evaluations suffer from one or more constraints that affect the comprehensiveness and validity of findings and conclusions. These may include overall limitations on time and resources, unanticipated problems in reaching all the key informants and survey respondents, unexpected problems with the quality of secondary data from the host-country government, and the like. In the methodology section, the team should address these limitations and their implications for answering the evaluation questions and developing the findings and conclusions that follow in the report. The reader needs to know these limitations in order to make informed judgments about the evaluation's credibility and usefulness.

READER-FRIENDLY STYLE

When writing its report, the evaluation team must always remember the composition of its audience. The team is writing for policymakers, managers, and takeholders, not for fellow social science researchers or for publication in a professional journal. To that end, the style of writing should make it as easy as possible for the intended audience to understand and digest what the team is presenting. For further suggestions on writing an evaluation in reader-friendly style, see Table 2.

TABLE 1. SUGGESTED OUTLINE FOR AN EVALUATION REPORT[1]		
Element	**Approximate Number of Pages**	**Description and Tips for the Evaluation Team**
Title Page	1 (but no page number)	Essential. Should include the words "U.S. Agency for International Development" with the acronym "USAID," the USAID logo, and the project/contract number under which the evaluation was conducted. See USAID Branding and Marking Guidelines (http://www.usaid.gov/branding/) for logo and other specifics. Give the title of the evaluation; the name of the USAID office receiving the evaluation; the name(s), title(s), and organizational affiliation(s) of the author(s); and the date of the report.
Contents	As needed, and start with Roman numeral ii.	Essential. Should list all the sections that follow, including Annexes. For multi-page chapters, include chapter headings and first- and second-level headings. List (with page numbers) all figures, tables, boxes, and other titled graphics.
Foreword	1	Optional. An introductory note written by someone other than the author(s), if needed. For example, it might mention that this evaluation is one in a series of evaluations or special studies being sponsored by USAID.
Acknowledgements	1	Optional. The authors thank the various people who provided support during the evaluation.
Preface	1	Optional. Introductory or incidental notes by the authors, but not material essential to understanding the text. Acknowledgements could be included here if desired.
Executive Summary	2-3; 5 at most	Essential, unless the report is so brief that a summary is not needed. (See discussion on p. 5)
Glossary	1	Optional. Is useful if the report uses technical or project-specific terminology that would be unfamiliar to some readers.
Acronyms and Abbreviations	1	Essential, if they are used in the report. Include only those acronyms that are actually used. See Table 3 for more advice on using acronyms.
I. Introduction	5-10 pages, starting with Arabic numeral 1.	Optional. The two sections listed under Introduction here could be separate, stand-alone chapters. If so, a separate Introduction may not be needed.
Description of the Project		Essential. Describe the context in which the USAID project took place—e.g., relevant history, demography, political situation, etc. Describe the specific development problem that prompted USAID to implement the project, the theory underlying the project, and details of project implementation to date. (See more tips on p. 6.)
The Evaluation Purpose and Methodology		Essential. Describe who commissioned the evaluation, why they commissioned it, what information they want, and how they intend to use the information (and refer to the Annex that includes the Statement of Work). Provide the specific evaluation questions, and briefly describe the evaluation design and the analytical and data collection methods used to answer them. Describe the evaluation team (i.e., names, qualifications, and roles), what the team did (e.g., reviewed relevant documents, analyzed secondary data, interviewed key informants, conducted a survey, conducted site visits), and when and where they did it. Describe the major limitations encountered in data collection and analysis that have implications for reviewing the results of the evaluation. Finally, refer to the Annex that provides a fuller description of all of the above, including a list of documents/data sets reviewed, a list of individuals interviewed, copies of the data collection instruments used, and descriptions of sampling procedures (if any) and data analysis procedures. (See more tips on p. 6.)
II. Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations	20-30 pages	Essential. However, in some cases, the evaluation user does not want recommendations, only findings and conclusions. This material may be

TABLE 1. SUGGESTED OUTLINE FOR AN EVALUATION REPORT[1]		
Element	**Approximate Number of Pages**	**Description and Tips for the Evaluation Team**
		organized in different ways and divided into several chapters. (A detailed discussion of developing defensible findings, conclusions, and recommendations and structural options for reporting them is on p 2 and p. 5)
III. Summary of Recommendations	1-2 pages	Essential or optional, depending on how findings, conclusions and recommendations are presented in the section above. (See a discussion of options on p. 4.) If all the recommendations related to all the evaluation questions are grouped in one section of the report, this summary is not needed. However, if findings, conclusions, and recommendations are reported together in separate sections for each evaluation question, then a summary of all recommendations, organized under each of the evaluation questions, is essential.
IV. Lessons Learned	As needed	Required if the SOW calls for it; otherwise optional. Lessons learned and/or best practices gleaned from the evaluation provide other users, both within USAID and outside, with ideas for the design and implementation of related or similar projects in the future.
Annexes		
Statement of Work	Some are essential and some are optional as noted.	Essential. Lets the reader see exactly what USAID initially expected in the evaluation.
Evaluation Design and Methodology		Essential. Provides a more complete description of the evaluation questions, design, and methods used. Also includes copies of data collection instruments (e.g., interview guides, survey instruments, etc.) and describes the sampling and analysis procedures that were used.
List of Persons Interviewed		Essential. However, specific names of individuals might be withheld in order to protect their safety.
List of Documents Reviewed		Essential. Includes written and electronic documents reviewed, background literature, secondary data sources, citations of websites consulted.
Dissenting Views		If needed. Include if a team member or a major stakeholder does not agree with one or more findings, conclusions, or recommendations.
Recommendation Action Checklist		Optional. As a service to the user organization, this chart can help with follow-up to the evaluation. It includes a list of all recommendations organized by evaluation question, a column for decisions to accept or reject each recommendation, a column for the decision maker's initials, a column for the reason a recommendation is being rejected, and, for each accepted recommendation, columns for the actions to be taken, by when, and by whom.

[1]The guidance and suggestions in this table were drawn from the writers' experience and from the "CDIE Publications Style Guide: Guidelines for Project Managers, Authors, & Editors," compiled by Brian Furness and John Engels, December 2001. The guide, which includes many tips on writing style, editing, referencing citations, and using Word and Excel is available online at http://kambing.ui.ac.id/bebas/v01/DEC-USAID/Other/publications-style-guide.pdf. Other useful guidance: ADS 320 (http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/320.pdf ; http://www.usaid.gov/branding; and http://www.usaid.gov/branding/Graphic Standards Manual.pdf.

TABLE 2. THE QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE FOR A READER-FRIENDLY TECHNICAL STYLE	
Writing Style—Keep It Simple and Correct!	Avoid meaningless precision. Decide how much precision is really necessary. Instead of "62.45 percent," might "62.5 percent" or "62 percent" be sufficient? The same goes for averages and other calculations. Use technical terms and jargon only when necessary. Make sure to define them for the unfamiliar readers. Don't overuse footnotes. Use them only to provide additional information which, if included in the text, would be distracting and cause a loss of the train of thought.
Use Tables, Charts and Other Graphics to Enhance Understanding	Avoid long, "data-dump"paragraphs filled with numbers and percentages. Use tables, line graphs, bar charts, pie charts, and other visual displays of data, and summarize the main points in the text. In addition to increasing understanding, these displays provide visual relief from long narrative tracts. Be creative—but not too creative. Choose and design tables and charts carefully with the reader in mind. Make every visual display of data a self-contained item. It should have a meaningful title and headings for every column; a graph should have labels on each axis; a pie or bar chart should have labels for every element. Choose shades and colors carefully. Expect that consumers will reproduce the report in black and white and make copies of copies. Make sure that the reader can distinguish clearly among colors or shades among multiple bars and pie-chart segments. Consider using textured fillings (such as hatch marks or dots) rather than colors or shades. Provide "n's" in all displays which involve data drawn from samples or populations. For example, the total number of cases or survey respondents should be under the title of a table (n = 100). If a table column includes types of responses from some, but not all, survey respondents to a specific question, say, 92 respondents, the column head should include the total number who responded to the question (n = 92). Refer to every visual display of data in the text. Present it after mentioning it in the text and as soon after as practical, without interrupting paragraphs. Number tables and figures separately, and number each consecutively in the body of the report. Consult the CDIE style guide for more detailed recommendations on tables and graphics.
Punctuate the Text with Other Interesting Features	Put representative quotations gleaned during data collection in text boxes. Maintain balance between negative and positive comments to reflect the content of the report. Identify the sources of all quotes. If confidentiality must be maintained, identify sources in general terms, such as "a clinic care giver" or "a key informant." Provide little "stories" or cases that illustrate findings. For example, a brief anecdotal story in a text box about how a woman used a clinic's services to ensure a healthy pregnancy can enliven, and humanize, the quantitative findings. Use photos and maps where appropriate. For example, a map of a district with all the rural clinics providing prenatal care and the concentrations of rural residents can effectively demonstrate adequate or inadequate access to care. Don't overdo it. Strike a reader-friendly balance between the main content and illustrative material. In using illustrative material, select content that supports main points, not distracts from them.
Finally…	Remember that the reader's need to understand, not the writer's need to impress, is paramount. Be consistent with the chosen format and style throughout the report.

Sources: "CDIE Publications Style Guide: Guidelines for Project Managers, Authors, & Editors," compiled by Brian Furness and John Engels, December 2001 (http://kambing.ui.ac.id/bebas/v01/DEC-USAID/Other/publications-style-guide.pdf); USAID's Graphics Standards Manual (http://www.usaid.gov/branding/USAID_Graphic_Standards_Manual.pdf); and the authors extensive experience with good and difficult-to-read evaluation reports.

For more information:

TIPS publications are available online at [insert website].

Acknowledgements:

Our thanks to those whose experience and insights helped shape this publication including Gerry Britan and Subhi Mehdi of USAID's Office of Management Policy, Budget and Performance (MPBP). This publication was written by Larry Beyna of Management Systems International (MSI).

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Contracted under RAN-M-00-04-00049-A-FY0S-84

Integrated Managing for Results II